

[By Matt Ryan, Burlington Free Press](#)

Joyce in Colchester said lawmakers were taking too long to pass a health-care bill. Thomas in Glover said they were moving too fast.

Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., sided with Joyce.

"I don't think we've rushed this," Welch said Monday night during an hour-long "telephone town hall." "The debate has gone on for years."

The call-in discussion centered on the Affordable Health Care for America Act, passed out of committee last week. Welch said he expects the full House to vote on the bill this week.

Welch has held five other meetings over the phone to discuss health care. More than 100 people from across Vermont dialed in at the start of Monday's conversation.

Evan in Burlington asked why Democrats continued to try and work with Republicans to create a bipartisan bill. Because the country would have more confidence in such a bill, Welch said.

"Regrettably, it looks like we're not going to get any Republican votes on this bill in the House," Welch said.

Max in Brandon asked how the bill would address insurance companies' anti-trust exemption. The bill would repeal that exemption, Welch said, and prevent insurance companies from colluding.

Welch said he supports the bill because, though not a "perfect bill," it would offer coverage to millions of uninsured Americans; prohibit insurance companies from dropping people with pre-existing conditions; promote care in terms of "value," not "volume"; and create a public option.

Paul in Hyde Park asked how much of the 2,000-page bill Welch had read. Welch said he read the whole bill while serving on the Energy and Commerce committee.

Follow up from Paul: Would Welch subscribe to the public option, if one became available.

Welch said he would like to sign up for the public option, but at 62, would soon be eligible for Medicare.

Alexa in Colchester asked what would happen to her coverage when she graduated from high school and went off her parents' health-care plan.

"Under this legislation, you'll be able to stay under your family's plan until you're 27," Welch said.

Sean in Fairfax asked whether the bill would cover illegal immigrants.

"I don't feel as though they should be covered," Sean said.

"They're not covered," Welch said.